

The growing interest in Virginia's and the federal preservation tax credits has led to a tremendous growth in the number of urban historic districts in the state. Comprehensive surveys of properties that document each individual structure speed up the process of identifying buildings that are eligible for tax credits. In the most recent Cost Share cycle (2000-2001) the City of Waynesboro is undertaking survey of a downtown commercial historic district, a residential Victorian neighborhood, and a historic African-American neighborhood. Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee is working on a downtown historic district that straddles the state line, the first bi-state effort under Virginia's Cost Share Program. Virginia's capital city of Richmond has completed a survey of two large inner-city neighborhoods, with survey documentation enabling nearly 1,000 property owners to be eligible for state rehabilitation tax credits. With the help of volunteer field survey, Norfolk has completed

National Register nominations for six residential historic districts, bringing recognition to over 3,000 properties. Roanoke, Virginia, is currently participating in a Cost Share project to survey and register over 200 structures in its downtown commercial area, a job considered critical to the city's downtown revitalization efforts. Because all of these projects are initiated by the local jurisdiction—city, county, or town—there is widespread and strong support and little sentiment that state government is imposing its planning efforts on the local governments.

The important partnerships that flow from these Cost Share projects underscore the parallel interests of the state and the locality. Virginia looks forward to continuing this comprehensive effort to identify, evaluate, and ultimately to protect its priceless historic resources.

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The Eye of the Professional vs. Opinion of the Community

All cultural heritage management actions in Australia, ranging from preservation to permitted destruction, are derived from a statement of cultural significance. Heritage places are ascribed cultural significance according to their aesthetic, historic, scientific, and social value. Each of these value components requires careful assessment in a manner most suited to the characteristics of that component.¹ The assessments are generally carried out by cultural heritage professionals, often with little explicit recognition of any values that may be held by the wider community. This practice is based on the implicit assumption that heritage professionals have the same value system as the community they serve, and that, therefore, they can develop plans which adequately represent the community's interest.

While the assessment of scientific and historic value, aided by guidelines, has long been the

prerogative of historians, architects, and archeologists, and while aesthetic value has been assessed by architects and art historians, the assessment of social value has often received only cursory treatment. A review of 72 shire heritage plans completed for New South Wales (NSW) has shown that the value discussion was dominated by the assessment of historic and aesthetic value. Less than 1% of the total number of pages discussing the four core values was devoted to social value.²

Part of the problem rests in the nature of assessment, where the heritage "profession" ascribes great significance to the physical form, fabric, or function of a "place," while largely disregarding its experiential nature. For the average citizen, however, this aspect makes a particular heritage place significant and others irrelevant. While heritage managers have accepted such values for indigenous cultural property,³ this has not been widely accepted practice in the non-indigenous arena.

The Case Study

Because of its rural nature and its generally stable population with few new residents, the Shire of Culcairn (southern NSW) was chosen to assess whether there is a discrepancy between “traditional professional” assessment and community perception.⁴

The research involved a desktop survey of existing information, a physical survey-cum-inventory of the area, and a householder questionnaire (mail drop to all 1,600 households in the shire). The questionnaire asked respondents to nominate heritage sites; and to rank a series of places which were eligible and non eligible under state criteria. A second, economic survey followed using individuals randomly drawn from the electoral roll. Analysis showed that the respondent samples were representative of the community, both in terms of demographic characteristics and geographical distribution. The community was surveyed “cold” to avoid influencing the outcomes of the nomination process. It is thus not surprising that the response rate was overall poor.

Of a total of 320 nominated sites, the numbers of nominations range from Morgan’s Lookout, a dominant, natural boulder formation associated with the activities of an 1860s bushranger (outlaw), with 89 nominations (or 29% of all responses) to a number of sites that were only nominated once.

Analysed according to the types of sites and the associated historic themes, individual buildings proved to be the most frequently community nominated site type. However, natural sites received the highest overall nominations for heritage protection. Although these results reflect the popularity of Morgan’s Lookout as a heritage site, even without this site in the analysis, natural sites are still highly valued as a heritage resource by the Culcairn community. To some extent, this can be expected in rural areas because natural sites or farming land made up a large proportion of public space, whereas in cities natural sites are less frequent.

Public heritage sites in the widest sense are the most commonly mentioned places. Private residences and homesteads do not figure prominently. Shops and other commercial buildings are not deemed significant either, with the exception of the Culcairn Hotel (local “watering hole”). This community view reflects, overall, the distribution of sites on the Register of the National Estate.⁵ In view of the long-term viability of her-

itage in Culcairn, however, this dominance of public places needs to be addressed.

The community nominations are interesting as they diverge significantly from professional assessments in some instances: the high prominence of natural heritage places; the role of moveable property, such as artefacts; and the substantial inclusion of monuments and memorials.

This suggests that the academic distinction between natural and cultural heritage is not evident in the views of the local community; the technical distinction between heritage places and artefacts as used in the heritage and planning community is not recognised by the community; and monuments and memorials have high present-day relevance in a rural community, possibly much more so than in an urban, and more impersonal setting.

To follow up on these observations, the second survey instrument, which focused on attitudinal and economic issues toward heritage not reported in this paper, contained a question as to the relative importance of specific resource types, developed from the list of community nominated sites. Rather than querying specific sites, categories or classes of sites were put forward. Respondents were asked to rate the site classes on a scale of (1) Not Important to (4) Very Important. The average score for all responses is greater than the theoretical mean score that would be located at the 2.5 level, i.e., halfway between slightly important and important. Variations can be observed. Natural landmarks are seen as the most important resource class, followed by churches. Both classes have comparatively small standard deviations. At the bottom end of the popularity scale are the grain silos as well as the hotels.

Implications

The investigation demonstrated a divergence between professional and public values. Importantly, it highlighted that communities also apply recreational and economic values in their estimation of cultural heritage places. The classificatory distinction between state heritage/national trust listed items and unlisted, as well as comparatively recent places does not enter the decision making process. Equally, the professional distinction between natural heritage and anthropogenic cultural heritage is not prominent in public consciousness.

The heritage community needs to consider whether the technical distinction between move-

able cultural property and heritage places is relevant for community education and more widely, whether this distinction is relevant at all. While moveable cultural property is a tradeable item and thus different from places and sites, there is on the one hand a history of relocation of buildings, bridges, and other large entities normally not deemed moveable, and on the other the increasingly dominant attitude of the Aboriginal community that moveable items ("artefacts") in sites should be left where they are, and that they should be curated in place and unchanged.

Likewise, it can be argued that there is no "natural" land left in Australia, and that all areas show evidence of human land modification in one form or another. To what extent, then, is the distinction between "natural" and "cultural" heritage still valid?

Notes

- ¹ James S. Kerr, *The Conservation Plan*. 5th Edition. (National Trust of Australia [NSW], Sydney, 2000).— Michael Pearson and Sharon Sullivan, *Looking after Heritage Places: The Basics of Heritage Planning for Managers, Landowners and Administrators*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1995.
- ² Shaun Canning, "Contested Space" – the role of social value in the assessment of cultural significance. B.App.Sci (Hons) Thesis. School of Environmental and Information Sciences, Albury. Charles Sturt University, 1999.—Shaun Canning and Dirk H.R. Spennemann (in press) Contested

Space: social value and the assessment of cultural significance in New South Wales, Australia. in: *Heritage Landscapes: Understanding Place and Communities*. Proceedings of the Lismore Conference.

- ³ Tom King and Patricia Parker, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*. National Register Bulletin No.38. (Washington, United States Department of the Interior, 1990).
- ⁴ Harris, K. (1995) The identification and comparison of non-market values: a case study of Culcairn Shire (NSW). Bachelor of Applied Science (Parks, Recreation and Heritage), Charles Sturt University, Albury NSW.—Spennemann, Dirk H.R. & Harris, Kellie (1996) Cultural heritage of Culcairn Shire: some considerations for strategic planning. *Johnstone Centre of Parks, Recreation and Heritage Report* Vol. 71 Charles Sturt University, The Johnstone Centre of Parks, Recreation and Heritage: Albury, NSW.
- ⁵ This is Australia's equivalent to the National Register of Historic Places.

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